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## BOOK REVIEWS

## RECENT BOOKS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

HANDBUCH DER ALTORIENTALISCHEN GEISTESKULTUR. ALFRED JEREMIAS.  
J. C. Hinrichs, Leipzig. 1913. Pp. xvi, 366. 10m.

THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL UNDER THE KINGDOM. ADAM C. WELCH. T. &  
T. Clark. 1912. Pp. xvi, 305.

THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL FROM THE EIGHTH TO THE FIFTH CENTURY.  
MOSES BUTTENWIESER. The Macmillan Co. 1914. Pp. xxii, 350.  
\$2.00.

THE RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. H. WHEELER ROBINSON.  
Charles Scribner's Sons. 1913. Pp. viii, 245. 75 cents.

ROOT-DETERMINATIVES IN SEMITIC SPEECH. SOLOMON THEODORE HALÉVY  
HURWITZ. Columbia University Press. 1913. Pp. xxii, 113.

The astral theory, of which Dr. Jeremias is now the leading exponent, concerns itself only with ultimate (that is, stellar) origins of religious ideas and procedures. It does not discuss the ethical and religious significance of cults. The astral lore, it is held, took different forms in different lands. The form it took in Israel is set forth in minute detail by Jeremias in *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East*. In this Manual he sketches the main principles of the Secret Lore, that, as is maintained, starting from Babylonia, or finding its best expression there, penetrated the whole East, and is reflected in the mythical, legendary, and historical narratives that embody the truths indicated by the celestial phenomena—monotheism and trinitarianism, conflict and redemption, death and the beyond. No argument is conceived to be necessary except to set side by side celestial phenomena and the corresponding facts of earthly life. The astral element of mystery appears, Jeremias remarks, in the fact that Moses and Ezekiel receive the plans of sacred buildings by divine revelation. His theory leads him to combat the opinion, held by Eduard Meyer and others, that Hebrew prophecy and messianism were derived from or deeply influenced by Egyptian ideas. Rather, he says, both Egypt and Israel give expression, each in its own way, to the common cosmic lore of the Orient (that is, in mundane phrase, we have in this case independent origination, under

similar conditions, in the two countries). He adds, however, that Israel impressed on all this astral lore a noble ethical significance. While this volume throws no light directly on the nature of the Old Testament religion, it contains, mingled with its fancies, suggestions that the instructed reader will be able to use with advantage.

The three works standing next in the list given above traverse practically the whole field of Old Testament religious thought. Dr. Welch discusses the stories of JE, prophecy before Amos, the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, and the book of Deuteronomy (he omits Micah as adding nothing to the preceding books, and Zephaniah as forming a transition to Deutero-Isaiah). Professor Buttenwieser includes all the writing-prophets from Amos down, except that he says little of Zechariah and nothing of Nahum, Obadiah, Haggai, and Malachi. Mr. Robinson's survey takes in the whole of the period from the early legends to Daniel. All three writers, cordially accepting the general conclusions of recent criticism, devote themselves to the exposition of the ethical and spiritual characteristics of the advanced thought of the times considered.

The points in the prophetic thought on which Dr. Welch lays stress are Yahweh's aloneness, his moral government of the world, and his peculiarly intimate relation to Israel. He recognizes the fact that Israel shares certain religious features with other peoples, and he remarks properly that what is important for our judgment of the Old Testament is not this common heritage from the past but the conceptions characteristic of the great Israelite thinkers. Yet he does not always keep this distinction in mind. He finds it noteworthy that even in the Pentateuchal narratives Yahweh is spiritual (that is, disassociated from external nature) and practically omnipotent, able to do whatever is necessary for the realization of his designs. But tribal gods are everywhere credited with these qualities. The distinction of the prophetic thought lies in the use that Yahweh is held to make of his powers. Further, Dr. Welch's habit of translating Old Testament language into terms of modern thought leads him insensibly to ascribe to the prophets broad quasi-philosophic generalizations and a well-rounded system that we cannot be sure they had distinctly in mind. To distinguish between the implicit and the explicit is not to detract from the epoch-making character of the prophetic conception of the world. One may doubt, for example, whether the Deuteronomic reformers held distinctly "the great conception of a nation filled throughout with the sense that it has its own character to preserve and its own work to fulfil, and is more interested in these things than in asserting its place in

the world" (p. 223). But the general treatment of the prophetic writings is good. Naturally, there is no little repetition, since the ideas discussed are everywhere the same; but this rather increases the rhetorical force of the presentation. It may be added that the difficulty that Welch and Battenwieser find in construing Hosea 1 and 3 may be lessened by the supposition that chapters 2 and 3 4 f. (in which the smooth flowing discourse differs so greatly from the ejaculatory style of 4-14) are not by Hosea, and that the episodes of 1 2-9 and 3 1-3 are free dramatizations of ideas suggested in chapter 2.

Dr. Battenwieser, after some general remarks on the prophets' consciousness of divine inspiration (a result of their sense of communion with God) and their vision of the ultimate regeneration of mankind, makes a detailed examination of the ideas contained in the writings attributed to Jeremiah. To bring out these ideas he subjects the chronological arrangement and the Hebrew text to a sharp criticism, in the course of which he offers numerous fresh suggestions, with full citations of recent works. Jeremiah, in fact, presents the culmination of prophetic spiritual experience, and his struggles, defeats, and victories are here set forth in a clear and helpful way. Sections worthy of special attention are the description of the temple-sermon (which is held to have consisted originally simply of 7 2-15, 21-26), and the analysis of the narrative of chapters 37, 38, 34, 32 3b-5, 21, containing an account of the persecution of Jeremiah under Zedekiah. The view that the preservation of the utterances of the prophets was due to their disciples rather than to themselves (held by several recent critics) is here vigorously combated. Since, however, we have no sufficient data on this point, it will be wise to reserve opinion. As to the prophetic conception of the punishment destined by Yahweh for Israel—whether it was inevitable and what was to be the final outcome—various opinions are held by commentators. Battenwieser agrees with those who think that the threat of doom is unconditional, that the prophets do not hope (and, he adds, do not desire) that it will be set aside by their preaching. These differences of opinion are due, doubtless, in part to the nature of the text, which is in some places vague, semipoetical, and ill-arranged, and thus admits of different interpretations. It must be borne in mind also that the utterances of the prophets are not to be treated as if they were articles in a carefully drawn-up creed. Their inspiration proper depended on their conviction of religious truth; their judgments of historical issues were affected by their momentary emotions, which they could not help identifying with the will of God. They all (except the Deuteronomists and a few others)

thought the moral and religious condition in Israel desperate (their picture is perhaps too highly colored), demanding no less than the wiping-out of the existing national life. But such a conviction would not be incompatible with some element of hope, some instinct that Yahweh, as protector of his people, would find a way of escape consistent with his moral requirements. It is true that the larger hope is expressed not by the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries but by the seers of the sixth and following centuries; yet Isaiah and Jeremiah thought immediate deliverance possible. However, the prophetic views concerning the fate of the nation Israel are not of great importance, since they do not affect their general moral and religious principles. The same thing may be said of supposed references and allusions to a "world-catastrophe," of which, if belief in it existed in Egypt, Canaan, or Israel, we know very little. Certainly there is no evidence that such a belief materially affected the religious development of Egypt and Western Asia.

Within the limits of a small volume Mr. Robinson has succeeded in giving an intelligible sketch of the Hebrew religion from the crude beginnings to the verge of the reception of the belief in ethical immortality. In successive chapters he discusses the Old Testament idea of religion (moral intensity along with lower elements); the idea of God (personality, purpose to draw men into moral fellowship with himself); the idea of man (unity of body and soul, relation of human spirit to divine spirit, life in Sheol); the approach of God to man (theophanies, prophets, the written word); the approach of man to God (sacred places, seasons, ceremonies and persons, moral holiness); the problems of sin and suffering (forgiveness, cosmic evil); the hope of the nation (the kingdom of God, nationalism and universalism); and, finally, the permanent value of the Old Testament (its relation to the New Testament, to philosophy, to experience). In this sort of historical treatment there is the obvious advantage that it enables the writer to bring out clearly the lines of progress of the thought and the conditions, internal (great personalities) and external (foreign influences), that induced or favored the progress. Illustrations of this fact may be found throughout the volume; see, among other points, the remarks on the contribution of Semitic animism to the Old Testament conception of religion (p. 46 ff.), the statement of the character and function of the spirit (pp. 81 f., 111), the qualifications to be made in estimating the moral excellence of Old Testament religion (p. 42 ff.), and references here and there to the peculiar family relation between Israel and Yahweh. The homely phraseology expressing this relation, inherited, doubtless in part from the old clan

constitution, has contributed greatly to making the Old Testament the source of devotional literature for the Western Indo-European peoples. The length of the period treated by Mr. Robinson has made it impossible for him to consider in detail all the important questions that arise therein. He holds that something in the nature of a covenant took place at Sinai (pp. 38 f., 186 ff.), and that the fact that the people entered into the agreement voluntarily helped to give the Yahweh religion its remarkable virility; but he does not ask what tribes were there represented, and he does not mention the exegetical and other difficulties connected with the narrative of Ex. 18. He does not explain what he means by the affirmation that Yahwism was "essentially moral in principle" (p. 38). Elsewhere he appears to assume that the moral character of the religion varied according to the moral character of the people, as indeed every ancient religion had the morality of the community professing it. He sees in Isa. 53 the belief that all the world is to be brought to repentance and salvation through the suffering of the Servant (Israel) (p. 176 *al.*). He does not notice the view that the reference is to the salvation of blind and disobedient Israelites, nor does he treat carefully the noteworthy apocalyptic passage Isa. 25 6 ff. In connection with the remark on the practical failure of the prophets (p. 122), the significance of the succeeding ritual movement in the general development would deserve extended notice (if there were room for it). On the origin of the Sabbath (p. 139), the opinion that it was originally the day of the full moon should be referred to. Some of the larger questions here involved have been touched on elsewhere by Robinson (see the reference, p. 98, n. 2); and the excellence of his work makes us wish that he would treat at length the Old Testament conceptions of the nature of God, the nature of salvation, the nature of the right and the good, and other points that arise in connection with these.

This is not the place for a technical notice of Dr. Hurwitz's Dissertation, which is purely philological. It must suffice to say that he gives a good sketch of the discussions bearing on the origin of Semitic trilateral and bilateral stems, and that his observations on the question are well-considered and helpful. Such investigations may possibly be of service in fixing the meaning of certain Hebrew words, and may thus aid in the interpretation of the Old Testament; but these researches go back to remote and dim prehistoric times, and for our knowledge of the Biblical vocabulary we have to depend mainly, if not exclusively, on the usage of the historical period.

CRAWFORD H. TOY.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.